

Northwest Territories Act

going to move just such an amendment. If he does, there will not be any lack of unanimity in respect of the idea once it comes to a vote.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Chairman, I have no doubt in my mind that the proposal made by the hon. member for the Yukon and supported by the hon. member for Skeena should be adopted. I have had a close and intimate relationship with the Northwest Territories for almost a third of a century. My constituency borders the area. I live in a community which serves as a gateway to the north, and I know many hundreds of people who live there. I think I am in a position to say unequivocally that these people now are ready for complete self-government.

I have some suggestions to make to the minister which he might take into consideration in assessing the virtues of this recommendation. I would call to his attention the situation that existed prior to the establishment of the two provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. At that time there was a Northwest Territories Act and a Northwest Territories council, before these two provinces were carved out of the territories which were governed under the Northwest Territories Act.

I did some research in this connection some time ago, when the other bill was before the house and before it had been submitted to the committee. I came across what I thought was a very interesting arrangement. At that time I think there was an elective council of some 22 or 24 members representing various constituencies in the Northwest Territories. The total legislative power resided in the hands of the elective council, but sitting with the council, without any right to vote and only in an advisory capacity, were officials who formed the basis of what would be, in a totally elective system such as we have in the House of Commons and in the provincial governments, a cabinet. I think there was an attorney general. There was a commissioner for public works; there was a commissioner in charge of administration in connection with financial matters. I think there was a territorial secretary and possibly one or two others. I am not able to indicate to the minister whether these officials were appointed by the territorial council. I believe they were appointed by the territorial council, but possibly the minister might be able to check me on this.

[Mr. Howard.]

So far as voting rights were concerned, however, these resided exclusively, as I understand it, within the elected members of the territorial council. Sitting in council with them from time to time would be the members whom you might say constituted an appointed cabinet. In this respect I think probably it would parallel the circumstances which prevail in the United States. I cannot say I agree with it, but it was an arrangement which probably will indicate the feeling.

In this area in the Northwest Territories I can see no reason that the people who live there could not be appointed. I suggest that if they were appointed it should be by the territorial council in conjunction with a commissioner. The officials who would serve in these capacities would from time to time sit in with the council to guide and advise them, but the final decision as far as voting is concerned would rest with the territorial council itself.

• (11:50 a.m.)

Some concern was expressed with regard to the passage of ordinances dealing with the expenditure of money. I suppose the same arrangement exists there as in the House of Commons and probably in the provincial legislatures. In our House of Commons, only if there has been a recommendation from His Excellency conveyed to the house by a member of the Privy Council is the house able to deal with the expenditure of money for a specific purpose.

I assume this is a safeguard which will always be available in the territories, so there can be no anxiety that the territorial council would spend money far beyond amounts it could raise in the territory and would thereby commit the federal government to expenditures beyond which the federal government did not wish to go at any particular moment. I think there is a necessity for some safeguard there, but that safeguard exists; it could be carried on as it is embedded in our own constitution.

I think at this time, in view of the forthcoming observance of our centennial, we should give to the Northwest Territories the right of complete self-government, and I suggest that with qualifications of this kind the minister would be under no handicap. In addition, I think the council would have the benefit of the advice of those people who might be appointed in this way, with the certain provision that they would not be